

FRIENDS AND MEMORIES

A game for 3-7 players and 1 moderator (optional) by Jose Zagal. Playtime 2-3 hours(?)

PREMISE

In this short-form larp you will play a group of elderly lifelong friends that have known each other for as far as you can all remember. As players, you will collaboratively establish who your characters are and come up with some of the life experiences you have shared together over the last 60-70 years. You will play a series of scenes during which you all reminisce on some shared event from your past. Happy memories, for the most part. Towards the end, you will each forget each other until – as the larp closes – you all sit in the company of strangers. Content, but surrounded by strangers nonetheless.

Props/Materials: Index cards and pens/pencils (one per player)

PRE-GAME WORKSHOP

The pre-game workshop is the moment to remind players of safety techniques (see below) that may be necessary. While this game can get emotional, it isn't necessarily "intense". The workshop is intended to remind players of the general tone of the larp (happy, friendly, joyful) as well as to establish who the characters are and how they know each other.

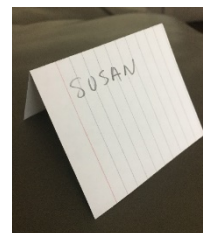
Setup: It is recommended that players should sit facing each other. If there is a small table, use it.

For the players: You will play elderly characters who have been friends their entire lives. These are good friends. The best friends. The kind that have a lot of shared experiences and stories. They love to get together, and they often reminisce, laugh and joke about things from their past. In this workshop you will establish who your characters are and how you met as children. You should use the index cards to make note of any details you do not wish to forget, you can also use the cards to write your characters' name – such that the other players can remember it as you play (see picture below).

For each player

(in any order, but the entire process for each player)

1. State your character's name together with one physical characteristic/trait that is unique to you amongst this group of friends. (e.g. I am blonde, I have freckles, I'm really tall).
2. For each of the other characters, briefly **discuss with them** how you met as **children** and what you liked about each other that led to you becoming friends. These should be short – one or two sentences if you had to write them down. (e.g. we met at the playground and you stole my action figure, we became friends when I later stole it back; we met in Mrs. Phillip's 1st grade class, we became friends because we sat next to each other and copied from each other's tests)
3. Note: This will take the longest with the first player, but as you go around it'll go faster because some of the initial relationships will have already been established. Thus, the last player only has to state their character's name and distinct physical characteristic.



Index Card with Character Name
(note space left to write nickname)

Safety Techniques

Discuss whether anyone has boundaries or worries. If, during play, someone's boundaries are crossed (or about to be) call **CUT**. Play then stops until the situation is resolved. Call **BRAKE** if you don't want play to escalate. Your scene partners then back off.

See also: <https://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Safewords>

SCENES

Play as many scenes as there are players with an additional (final) scene at the end. The premise for each scene is the same: You have all gathered to reminisce about a meaningful shared social event from your past. The first scene takes place when the characters are in their thirties (reminiscing on something they did together in their twenties) and the final scene takes place in the present day, when the characters are in their 80s. See below for additional notes regarding the final scene.

Moderator:

Before each scene remind players that they will reminisce on a positive social experience they had when they were in their (thirties, mid-thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, etc.) and approximately when this would have been (see “Ages and Decades” below). Scenes should go on as long as they need to, and players can end the scene whenever they want (see below). Encourage players to refer to earlier scenes as well! Scenes are played chronologically.

Ending each scene: Scenes end when one of the players bestows a nickname on a character that does not yet have one. (e.g. “Ah, yes – that’s when [nickname] stuck for [character name]”, “I remember that’s when we named [character name] [nickname], etc.”). When this happens, the character should be called by their nickname for the remainder of the game. It helps if they write their nickname on their index card as well.

Sample Ideas for Scenes

(players are reminiscing about...)

Parties, weddings, weekend getaways, fishing trips, baby showers, rock concerts, multi-family vacations, high school reunions, sporting events, retirement parties, local/regional or nationwide celebrations.

Nicknames

Nicknames come from a place of love. They can be funny and cute, but above all they demonstrate affection. People outside the circle of friends may not understand the nickname, especially if there’s a story behind it. Nicknames are short and easy to say (1-2 words).

Ages and Decades

When characters in their “irties” are reminiscing about something they did during the following...

Thirties: 1970s
Forties: 1980s
Fifties: 1990s
Sixties: 2000s
Seventies: 2010s

FINAL SCENE

Moderator: By now every character should have a nickname. Begin the scene as usual – while the scene plays out, at different moments select a player character and remove their index card. From that point forward, that character has lost all memory of their friends and what they went through. They also no longer know who they are, though they might have a vague sense of familiarity. They’re not sad, but content. They are now surrounded by strangers. Over the course of the scene do this for each character until they have all lost their memories. Do this in such a way to maintain interest and suspense rather than to “cut someone off”. Moments of silence are particularly good for this.

Ending : The final scene ends when all the characters remain silent for an appropriate amount of time. Afterwards feel free to have a discussion about the experience.

Acknowledgements

Initial ideas for this larp were developed at Living Games 2018 with Will Osmond, Andrew Lacanieta, and Atomic Pixie. Thanks to Evan Torner for early feedback and comments.

Inspiration

My grandmother died of Alzheimer’s and I worry about my Mom who recently turned 70. Perhaps I’m processing that anxiety. I also recently watched the Spanish animated movie “Arrugas” (Wrinkles). I highly recommend it.